

Ecology and bioethics: When limits are not enough

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Abstract

Ecology and bioethics as new disciplines appear during the twentieth century as a result of the horror produced by industrial and technological abuses. Therefore, as is generally conceded, they have a common and positive origin. Critics comprised mainly of writers, however, have observed that bioethics has led to a complacent attitude that ultimately serves to provide moral alibis for much of the abuses made in the name of science. All that is technically possible winds up being done finding justification in the edifices of expert bioethical analytics. You may suspect that the same is true in the field of ecology. This is definitely a betrayal of the claims of the founders of the new sciences, but it is not new in human history, where Man's most valuable understanding and higher values have routinely been manipulated. Part of the current problem is the deification of Man, both as an individual life and with regard to the concept of humanity. Paradoxically, this deification causes the loss of the notion of dignity and promotes the conversion of concrete man into a mere instrument of technological action. Nonetheless, our times still have grounds for optimism. The fundamental answer lies in the notion of "limit" or "frame," which puts man in his proper place within the universe, which is a distinct place from the purely natural world and is closely linked divinity. *Humanae Vitae* is a lucid illustration of this unifying conception.

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1. Introduction

There are disciplines that mark a certain epoch and embody its values. Such is the case Ecology and Bioethics.

Both terms seem to arouse a set of positive values and frame the new times. As it always occurs in human affairs, its substrate is the horror one feels when faced with the same acts that best define each epoch. Horror is the midwife of values. The triggering mechanism is, it would seem, the destructive capacity of man, increasingly weighing on the environment and mankind itself. The epiphany to this apocalypse occurred during the Great War of 1914-18, and is encapsulated in the warriors' memory of wholesale massacre and the dreadful transformation of the pastoral landscape into horrific battlefields [1, pp. 91 ss.].

The reaction, at least in the beginning, will not be as radical as one might expect; for it will look for solutions to the begotten evil within the same discourse of technology and progress. These outdated values were, after all, responsible for what had occurred. In one of those terrible paradoxes of History, the search for new values seems to have begotten several totalitarian worldviews. In this way, we are once again witness to the manifestation of the human capacity to rationalize our behavior, "to take advantage of evil for good," and to adapt and accommodate principles with surprising ease.

2. Transformative man

Transformative man is astonished at his own deeds. His greatness lies in the freedom that has led him to treat everything in creation

as an object of his activity. It was inevitable that at some point Man would become the victim of his delusions. The Colombian writer Nicolás Gómez Davila, a critic of the twentieth century, pronounced in a well-known epithet: "In order to excuse his attacks against the world, Man determined that matter is inert" [2, p. 44].

If external realities and the lives of other men, their travels, the government or religion have committed those acts which the entire literary memory of the twentieth century narrates in detail; that which will perpetrate against itself, that is to say, against other men, by extending technical limits to infinity, will overcome the worst nightmares.

To fulfill these extremes of transformation, man performs a double act that almost constitutes a crime. In one act, Man proceeds to admire technology as the only value, while in the other he cleaves the self into body and spirit, thereby completely diluting both.

In the first instance, the intervention of nearly miraculous science is fundamental. Derived from this intervention, the prodigy of technology is born. Worse still, as the pendulum swings from the first to the second, a regression occurs: "It is less dangerous to give power to the insane than to technicians; for even from demented people we might expect moments of lucidity" [3, p. 75].

The old dream of fulfilling the eschatological promise 'in society'; in the transformation of the world 'or 'in the construction of a new spirit 'has become vulgarized and infantilized; and it is arrested in pure appearance. In this way, the new fashionable mirage is built. Man, who fears destroying the world through his action, seems to want to rebuild himself. The reasoning is described by the still lucid Lombardi Vallauri de Terre: "Tutto è fattibile, tutto il fattibile è lecito» potrebbe proporsi com formula of ontological nichilismo ed ethico based scientific-technological constitutive della prima Terra"[4, p. 12].

The new dream combines the two elements of liberating man: on one hand we have the conversion of everything into the object

of human transformation; while on the other, we observe the will to overcome, the ultimate promise of the man-God.

The trans-human impetus indulges in hubris twice. First it tries to hide the misery of our own condition that assails us from behind our mask of optimism and fable of the eternal feast, wherein man exists merely to indulge in fun in order to stave off the nonsense of his actions and existence. Then comes the technological caricature that aspires to construct, projecting this false man into an even phonier product, an object that pretends to be a subject. Since man is grounded in the lie of things exceeded, we might well expect even greater falsehood in the final result.

Ancestral tradition has expressed doubt about the dreams of the technology. We see this in the story of the wings of Icarus and in the film “Modern Times”: “Technology does not fulfill the old dreams of man, but rather imitates them with irony” [2, p. 22].

This wisdom underpins the resistance to this technological project, even though it is hegemonic in thought or weak non-thought. These pages seek to elucidate whether these ‘resistances’ are assimilated, as is the case with almost everything that has been tried to oppose the postmodern non-project, or whether they have borders or might be rather like the first milestones to appear along an alternative path.

Think of boundaries that do not wall off, but rather merely serve to mark the trail. A certain segment of bioethical discourse has sought to justify the “limits” to this action through a more or less veiled application of the precautionary principle and by the assimilation of man into some kind of biological entity that must be preserved without affecting equilibrium. The term ‘balance’ seems to be a sort of magic word that, if we observe the march of life diachronically, scarcely masks the permanent presence of a ferocious imbalance. Despite the clamor incited by this proposal today, it does not seem to have made anyone abandon the possibility of transformation, from the limit to any extended practice. The possi-

ble is realized: “Technological mistakes are charged in the flesh of those who commit them, while misguided axiological options need centuries for their consequences to frighten fools” [2, p. 93].

In bioethics even more than in the ecology, however, the denunciation of moral manipulation has been more conspicuous. The new superstructure would be little more than a balm for the smarting conscience or, even worse, one of the tools for building a new ideology, understood, of course, as an intellectual effort to mask what is real.¹

Literary genius has surpassed academic discourse, and the fierce denunciation of Oriana Fallaci is the landmark of this awareness: “Before the idol Science, before the divinity Science and before the myth of scientific research, bioethics always stands with arms crossed. In 1997 when Dolly the sheep was born and it was clear that human cloning was possible, the representatives of the noble discipline defined such work as ethically unacceptable.”[7] And Fallaci adds: “Denunciations, [statements of] conviction, but then everyone began to close their eyes and back away from one line in the dirt to another, to allow compromises that, in fact, were licenses. It is their way of being Politically Correct. At first, they exclaim their umbrage at the scandal. Then they begin to mumble about how we must give things further consideration and that scientific discoveries cannot be banned, suggesting we cannot go backwards, and in this way they mislay their conviction. Bans and convictions undergo revision. They even become complicit in the crime. Always with the pretext of therapeutic apology and ‘understanding’”[7].

With less vehemence, perhaps, but with equal clarity Leon Kass expressed what is arguably the most acute criticism from within the new science. In his article of 1997 *The Wisdom of Repugnance*, he asserts that much of the guilt of our complacency resides, sadly, in the same bioethics and especially the exoneration moral turpitude provided experts.²

In contrast, according to Kass, Bioethics was founded by people who understood that the new frontiers of biology would affect deeper aspects of our humanity. The field, however, was snared in the nets of analytical philosophy, leading to a kind of professionalization shaped by naïve faith, in which the analysis of the arguments warning of potential evils arising from these technological developments, including questions germane to the political sphere, would be resolved with compassion, regulations and respect for autonomy. However, the ultimate effect has been to turn great human questions into a muddle or perhaps, more aptly, into a porridge [9, p. 18].

We must remember that Kass' work stands on the theoretical foundation put down by Hans Jonas, whose approach demanded a radically new way of facing the problems arising from humanity's capacity to apply technology to ever more destructive ends. This problem demanded an approach that included renunciation and limits [10, pp. 76ss.].

In our attitudes toward ecology, we might ask ourselves if this limit has not been reached in a way distinct from what is occurring in bioethics. I must express my doubts on this point, largely because of the fact that it is the field of bioethics where the great human issues are revealed and the real debate framed. It is very likely that professionalized ecology has undergone the same process we denounce.

There is, of course, a compelling reason that is often overlooked, which turns the entire ecological discourse into a voluntary option, i.e., the inability to establish a value that does not depend on mere sentimental opinion, something that in our times is immminently a matter of manipulation. The difficulty, it is clear, is associated with the loss of 'nature' as a normative device.

The cultural reference to nature as a normative barometer is ancient, practically eternal, but the appeal to nature also entails disconcerting elements, because when nature is transformed by technology, thought of as essentially positive, it is not clear how nature

might place limits on man's Promethean weakness for temptation. In fact, among opponents of extra-maternal reproduction or cloning, who react against what they call the 'superstition of nature'; this is often the first objection they pose.

Recall that in the prevailing mentality, progress as a human autonomous action also implies moral progress that is practically unlimited, at least until one can, in the manner of the Gnostics, immanently bring about the eschatological promise culminating in the end of History. The new is good, and the newer something is, the more unnatural it must be. What is more, it defies the limits set by the hoodwinked Zeus. After all, a few eagles and one's liver is a small price to pay for achievement. Progress as a moral ideal, it seems, has been taking liberties for some time. Failing to accomplish what it longs for, 'progress' equates what it accomplishes with longing [2, p. 22].

More skeptical still was Dostoevsky underground man who acknowledged no such thing as moral progress or, if you like, he preferred to face so-called scientific progress with the eagerness of blood: "What has softened civilization in us? The only thing this has brought to man is a multitude of sensations and ... decidedly, nothing more. But with the development of so many facets, man probably goes to the extreme of finding pleasure even in blood. This has happened before. You have noticed that history's most ambitious blood-letters have almost always been sophisticated, civilized gentlemen, not at all like Attila the Hun or Stenkas Razins, who hardly come to the their shoe tops...In all events, if civilization has not made man more blood thirsty, it has probably made him worse and more cravenly blood thirsty than ever before" [11, p. 88].

The underground man's ego is, at least, strongly felt. The divisions Adriano Pessina finds in the unsatisfied ego have not necessarily occurred in him [12, pp. 123ss.].

The most important split occurs between person and human being. But the excision continues in the innumerable egos, or ra-

ther, in the egos where the contemporary subject disintegrates into a succession of immediate experiences or disparate sensations.³

A Spanish novelist has described it more precisely than the philosophers: «What should be made clear then is this: 1. Every totalitarian, racist or inquisitorial society is based, has always been based and shall be based on the irrelevance of the individual against the demands and conveniences of that society, in the legitimization of death of a few to serve the happiness of the many. 2. The conception of man implicit to that society is of man as an instrument –a reified, merely technical reality: the fetus is not yet a man, the criminal or the free thinker have ceased to be men, the former for his evil and the latter for heterodoxy. 3. A society that relativizes respect for life dismantles the mechanisms for inhibiting murder, which the culture has erected laboriously though without total success »[14].

With dutiful optimism while referring to the environment, Pope Ratzinger pointed to a path to rediscover the answer, a way that, while evidently beckoning beyond, sought out a meeting point in the contemporary world. The quote is long, but it is the most inspiring piece of what we might nostalgically call the remains of the great European intelligentsia: “But how is this accomplished? How do we find the entrance into immensity or globality? How can reason find its greatness again without slipping into irrationality? How can nature appear again in its depth, with its demands and its indications?”[15]. Noting that he did not want his words to be interpreted as taking sides, he recalled how since the seventies ‘young people’ had realized that there was something out of sorts in our relationship with Nature, adding: “Let me ponder this point for a moment. The importance of ecology today is indisputable. We must listen to the language of nature and respond to it coherently. However, I would like to address a point seriously, which, it seems to me, has been forgotten today and yesterday: There is also an ecology of man. Man also has a nature that he must respect and

should not manipulate at his whim. Man is not only a freedom that he creates on his own. Man does not create himself. Man is spirit and will, but also nature, and his will is just when he respects nature, when he listens and accepts himself for what he is, and admits that he has not created himself. Thus, and only in this way, is true human freedom realized"[15].

The bet is a risky one, because if we lose, we could find ourselves in the *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and which Kass himself cited when he saw in the challenge posed by cloning a way to veer away from a dangerous precipice [16]. He observed that although cloning would remain a rare practice, any society tolerating it would not be the same. The same is true of a society that tolerates incest or cannibalism. Since proffering his observations Kass has had the chance to be surprised by the degree of "hedging acceptance" within our societies. Acceptance of cloning means that procreation is nothing but the manufacture of children who will be treated as projects submitted to our will, while allowing the eugenics of redesign to march on.

The risk lies not only in the next advances (towards the precipice), but also along the road already traveled. The total change from reproductive to productive paternity (and therefore a consumer relationship) was denounced earlier by the Spanish philosopher Julian Marias, referring to one of the great institutions of our time, i.e., widely available, free abortion on demand: Isn't this the crux of the issue? Is this nothing less than a process of 'depersonalization,' that is, of 'de-hominization' of man and woman, the two irreducible, mutually necessary forms from which human life arises? [...] And if this is imposed and generalized, if humanity at the end of the twentieth century lives in accordance with such principles, will it not end up utterly compromising that human condition? That is why it seems to me that the social acceptance of abortion is, without a doubt, the most serious thing that has happened in this century, which is coming to a close." [17]

3. Man sees himself as God

In contemporary academic discourse, one must to be aware of the near impossibility of openly introducing arguments that admit the concept of Transcendence. For this reason, the only explanations of the present evil considered valid always lie outside of such open discourse; and those in the Academy who openly admit the concept of Transcendence must occupy the fringes in the role of penitent, as was the case with Eric Voegelin or Hans Jonas and is currently the case with MacIntyre or Leon Kass.

Also for this reason, it is in the aphorists or the novelists where lucidity shines through. Without a sense of order that includes Transcendence, neither bioethics nor ecology can be properly understood. But there is a greater risk, a prideful act already committed involving the substitution of God for the idea of man as god.

The process of Man's self-liberation through the transformation of everything clearly implies that man is understood as God. But this man-god who preaches the divine condition of himself needs to eradicate Transcendence. The man who, in a fortunate expression uttered by Gomez Davila, ceased to be a fearful animal when he 'invented' God, returns to the condition of fearful beast precisely because of the death of God, which for man is literal suicide: From the birth of God to his death, the history of man unfolds "[18, p. 45].

In fact, "that which distinguishes man is not the weapon he carves or the fire he ignites" [18, p. 46]. To some extent animals also do these things. Nor is his essence found in the richness of his cranial circumambulations, or in the exercise of intelligence knitted closely to primordial functions: This man "would hardly repeat familiar routines to a paleontologist fresh out of school" [18, p. 46]. In its empirical facet, the magnified technique is but the prolongation of organic gestures.

Man appears "when, in the face of uncertainty or threat, the terror invading his entire being is substituted by sacred horror. An

inexplicable rupture in the homogeneous presence of things reveals an alien essence in world that is distinct from earthly manifestations" [18, p. 47]. It is not his physical capacity that will distinguish the man from the rest of the animals, for beauty, justice, and freedom could never be derived from the entire set of animal traits.

Man transcends the animal through the perception of a presence that places him in a different universe: "In the silence of the woods, in the murmur of a fountain, in the erect solitude of a tree, in the extravagance of a rock, Man hears a question that confounds him. God is born in the mystery of things" [18, p. 48].

By showing itself in this way, the universe transforms any gesture of man; and that is why, as Voegelin Gómez Davila states: "The tenacious elaboration of a religious experience has been the millenarian enterprise of man" [18, p. fifty].

And so when god dies, that is, when he dies in the conscience of man, Man shall plunge back into the abyss from which he only recently emerged. Rather than transcending, he regresses. Contemporary history is the true prehistory.

As recalled in a version related by Erasmus of Rotterdam, the Delphic oracle ominously foretold of the Spartans' imminent wars against the Athenians: *Vocatus atque non vocatus, Deus aderit*, or, as Simon Leys translates: Whether called or not, God will be present [19, p. 54].

This act is performed precisely through the deification of man, which is the ultimate consequence of trans-humanism and the imperfect neo-paganism of Gaya. It entails a break with eternity and of the connection between time and eternity of which Voegelin spoke.

Consequently, any order Man may build is absolute disorder; and his usurpation of God makes him the unhappiest of creatures. A disease of the spirit in the Platonic sense invades the place where the consciousness of Order should reign, cutting off the way to

a consciousness of the divine, as Voegelin explains in his controversial understanding of Platonic metaxy [20, pp. 41ss.].

The process then has only one internal limit. If the work of man had no meaning, something we have all sensed at one time or another, the entire matter of liberation is rendered into nothing but a pitiable illusion.

In arriving at a diagnosis of our contemporary condition, we must realize that the protagonist of our age, more than at any other time, is heavily afflicted with dissatisfaction, which is characteristic of our human condition, where we find ourselves trapped between the anxiety of infinity and the finite anguish entailed in our constitutionally restricted possibilities.

4. The *Humanae Vitae* and the path of improvement

The twentieth century has presented us two basic explanations of our current condition. One appeals to the awareness of man cowed into submission by the barbarism unleashed across a landscape devastated by both industrial rapacity and the mind-numbing killing fields of Flanders during the First World War. This explanation suggest an acceleration of what had been happening throughout Europe for decades, and turns against the transformative action undertaken to seek new values.

But at the same time the story is tainted by interior voices of resistance and old convictions, coming in tandem with new vices and the rhetoric of foolish faith touted in the charlatan's shiny ability to turn words into business ventures. In the exploitation of the idea of ecology, the essential core value of the new response exemplifies this vice: We see it manifest in the United Nation's warnings of the black future of environmental pollution awaiting us, in proposals to levy environmental taxes and in the marketing of environmentally friendly detergents, ecological cleanliness and ecological plastics [21].

That the most worthy spirits of the century, from Benedict XVI to Rau to Oriana Fallaci, warn us of the risk and were able to discern the path we were on is evidence of the surprising capacity of Man to attain Goodness, Beauty and Justice even from within the darkest cavern. Nonetheless, we seem destined to repeat role of Cassandra and her tragic fate. Warnings such as those proffered by Roth on the Concordat with Germany, Zweig on the world of yesterday, Donoso Cortes on socialism and Burke regarding equality stand as milestones of Man's penchant to ignore warning voices that might best be heeded. José Ortega y Gasset's "This is not it, this is not it" should always be: 'It was this, it was this.'⁴

The discovery of the new radicalism always follows, despite its shortcomings, the ecological template; and its purpose resides, paradoxically, in the task of salvaging humanity. Witnesses of the new way of doing things have very different backgrounds but share a common trait, i.e., a tendency to discern structures, to seek inspiration and find meaning beyond each plot of earth or specialization.

These milestones are often written texts and speeches whose aim, nonetheless, seems to be that of being refuted by expert analyses. Consider, for example, Johannes Rau's counsel: "Although we are talking about the new possibilities offered by the so-called life sciences, these do not deal primarily with scientific or technological issues. First and foremost, such matters entail decisions with axiological weight. We need to know what our image of the human being is and how we want to live. The formulation of ethical principles involves agreeing on means and limits. Of course it is very easy to adopt the attitude of the fox of the old fable and contend that the grapes were not ripe. The difficulty is to set and accept limits where it is possible to transgress them, and then to observe such limits even as one surrenders certain advantages. I believe this is exactly what we have to do. I think there are things that are not licit to do, despite the many advantages doing them actually or supposedly would afford us. Taboos are by no means

vestiges of pre-modern societies, and they are not signs of irrationality. In fact, recognizing a taboo can be the result of enlightened thought and action” [23].

The concept of limits appearing in this conception can be grasped holistically, from a standpoint informed by a new humility that cannot be the product of militant discourse espoused by those who caricature man as the destroyer of the planet. This position arises from anthropology that presupposes limitations, while also understands dignity.

One of the most widely discussed concepts that can be understood through this lens is posited by Leon Kass (like Rau, a non-Christian), who deals with the phenomenon of revulsion.

Kass begins by recognizing that revulsion is not an argument and that many reviled things of yesterday are accepted today. However, in certain cases, which he calls crucial, revulsion is an emotional expression of profound wisdom that does not fully articulate a rational discourse. Kass wonders, for example, whether a perfectly adequate reason can be proffered to explain the horror we feel before the idea of consensual incest between father and daughter [9, p. 20].

Classical philosophers such as Aristotle warn us of such things, playing with sarcastic example of Aristophanes’ play *The Clouds*, which deals with a son who beats his father.

In the *Magisterium*, the general anthropological answer to which we refer offers some of the most crucial examples, which not only culminate in a long reflection, but also prophetically (like some of the texts mentioned above) in seminal, prophetic potency. Such is the case of one of the texts (and we could hardly expect less), that has been attacked head on and continues to be pilloried by complacent thinkers: the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* issued by Pope Paul VI, which posits an anthropology fundamentally opposed to the contemporary trend. His lucidity, moreover, manifests itself more powerfully as time passes. His absolute radicalism is the way to save man. In the essential function of reproduction, in-

so far as it is the way through which every human comes into being, Pope Paul VI rejects the manipulation that turns all men into mere objects.

The encyclical can be read without appealing to anthropology or any underlying church doctrine, and need not be taken as a treatise on sexual morality. Obviously we know that this morality has a strong theological and anthropological foundation, but it is Pope Paul's ability to preserve the totality of human experience that informs the *Humanae Vitae*, making it the primary bulwark against the pragmatics of instrumentality that leads to the downfall of humanity.

The agreement does not then arise from teasing out every extreme detail from its exceptionality, but in its total capacity to elaborate a narrative that accounts for what we have come to call human dignity in the field of human action. That is why we have constantly cited literature's superior aptitude⁵ for describing complexity, such as in the vein of Rene Girard [26, p. 60].

Since the arguments presented in *Humanae Vitae* have already been discussed thoroughly in this journal, let it suffice but to remember that the moment of rupture of the 1960's foretold success and not error.

At this point the dialogue yields to the truth, because only through truth is any dialogue possible.

This radical morality dealing with the salvation of man also exerts impact on the legal sphere in that it bears upon the very definition of law. By failing to heed *Humanae Vitae*, we have witnessed and facilitated a vast transformation of subjects into objects. This can be seen as man reentering the domain from which he emerged by abolishing slavery: man has once again become a commodity of commerce.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of *Humanae Vitae*. It is not so much a concrete question of Christian anthropology or of the insertion of sexuality in the person. These are lesser facets that do not explain the stature of this monumental encyclical that

stands against tide. Nor do these aspects explain the colossal objections it has provoked. The exceptional singularity of the *Humanae Vitae* resides in its fidelity to the position of Christianity in the world. Surprisingly, at a time of apparent surrender before the onslaught of radical humanism, *Humanae Vitae* makes it impossible for one to appease, align or submit.

Since the issuance of *Humanae Vitae*, one can no longer yield to the perpetual bourgeois temptation that would turn religion ultimately into justification of any dominant point of view.

On the other hand, *Humanae Vitae* situates the anti-bioethics viewpoint. In view of the limits set by Montini, how can Man transform his condition or rebuild a 'scientific' paradise on earth through a kind of life science that omits the problem of evil? This obstacle stands obstinately; and it should not be surprising that those who place all their hopes in the divinations of postwar man, scientific transformation, and the new subject of solidarity or a new universal ideology of government are those also making extraordinary efforts to denounce this strange return of the encyclical of Pope Paul VI.

If the text seems to warn us against what awaits us in the immediate future, i.e., the absolute commodification of prenatal life, the generalized use of abortion as birth control and the trivialization of sexual relations, the encyclical's power resides not so much in its apparent clairvoyance, but rather in the foundational knowledge of what man will do if he attempts the Adamic reconstruction of the world.

The radicalism of the *Humanae Vitae* is total precisely as it extends its roots deep into the tradition of Genesis. As a result, it opposes the technocratic mode of government that tinges Man's current condition in the world with pessimism. This apparent paradox underlies quite a few modern contradictions, as both of its two positions reject the idea of ??a pre-existing higher order that is not granted to Man or recognized by him.

Sometimes when we engage in a bioethical debate, even when defending the ‘positions’ of *Humanae Vitae*, we lose sight of these radically opposed worldviews. Therein, lies the unique importance of this encyclical.

The importance of *Humanae Vitae* endures despite the fact that it is constantly under attack and, conversely, at risk of being forgotten or buried. Precisely because it is a frontal statement of rebellion, it is disgraceful that it should be shunted aside wherever the Golden Calf is raised.

The Christian approach, i.e., the received wisdom of the Book of Genesis, allows one to know Creation in a way different from that of the recomposing ignorance we have applied to subdue Nature.

Thus Environmentalism frees itself from many of its hazards and, in turn, reveals the need of Man to regain the center of his action.

There is nothing original in this reasoning and it has been expressly reiterated by Benedict XVI.

Consequently, faced with the transformational action of the human subject, we must adopt a radical position, a position of limits and absolutes.

This position, however, is impossible as long as we entertain the fallacies of Man as an improbable quantity through technological liberation, coupled with the conceit of opposing goods and of the law without grounds in Nature, existing merely as operational action of the state.

The encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* issued by Benedict XVI in 1970 addresses the ambiguity implicit in technology, saying: “On one hand human creativity gives rise to and is an instrument of personal liberation: but on the other hand, it can be understood as an instrument of a kind of absolute freedom that attempts to dispense with the limits inherent to things” [27].

This ambiguity is reflected in a new technocratic ideology gripping Man. It is the mentality that attempts to make truth coincide

with mere feasibility. Pope Benedict adds: “But when the only criterion of truth is efficiency and utility, development is automatically denied. Indeed, true development does not consist primarily of doing. The key to development lies in an intelligence capable of understanding technology and of fully grasping the human meaning of the works of Man in accord with the horizon of meaning of the person’s entire being” [27] When one succumbs to ideological temptation, as in all cases temptation, one’s freedom is completely lost, since: “Human freedom is such only when it responds to the attractions of technology with decisions informed by moral responsibility.”[27]

If the verdict is based on the fact that until now bioethics, restricted by limits of complacency, has only served as a sort of escort to this radical loss of freedom and undermining of human reality,⁶ this does not mean that the field of Bioethics cannot be reconceived fundamentally as an arena of intellectual debate. The words of Benedict XVI challenge the field along two lines of reasoning: “Scientific discoveries in this field and the possibilities of technical intervention have expanded so much that they seem to impose the choice between these two types of reason: a reason open to Transcendence or a reason enclosed in Immanence. This is a decisive *aut*. But the rationality of the technical task centered only on itself reveals itself as irrational, because it involves a stubborn rejection of meaning and value. For this reason, the refusal to engage with the concept of Transcendence shall always lead one to trip over the questions of how can being arise from nothing and how can chance produce intelligence” [27].

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